**School community**

My school community is one of considerable wealth. The parent council regularly raises thousands of dollars which they contribute towards various enhancements to school life. Our community celebrates the Eucharist monthly and incorporates charitable fundraising year-round. Our students are generally welcoming to visitors and there are visible signs of our Catholic roots, such as references to religious themes, advent decorations in public, high traffic areas, a school flag representing our patron saint, etc. Our parents are generally proud of the teaching community and they support us in many tangible ways.

**Communication breakdown**

I once was accused by a parent of “harassing” her son. This was such a horrific and wounding accusation that I immediately became defensive and angry and felt a need to protect my own reputation. This was an unfortunate misunderstanding and misjudgement on the part of the parent of a very innocuous situation that had arisen at school and which had been miscommunicated by the child. My immediate impulse to protect myself was not reflective of the Gospel values. I should have tried to consider her perspective, the fact that we were both concerned for the best interests of her child and taking the responsibility of his education very seriously. This attitude of the “us” instead of “me” may have diffused a difficult conversation.

**Successful working relationships**

When a student engaged in a dangerous action that amounted to a kind of self-abuse, and when upon further investigation I learned that the child had also play acted hanging himself, I immediately called for a meeting with his parents. His parents are models as they had, in my opinion, created *“a home where tenderness, forgiveness, respect, fidelity, and disinterested service are the rule.”* (Groome) During our discussion of the events at school, the parents shared what had been transpiring at home. We, along with my administrator and a school social worker, worked together to put a plan of action in place for the child. We developed strategies for observation, reporting to each other and, of course, eventually welcomed the child to a meeting where we reaffirmed our love and support of him. We worked together for the common good and to underline the sacredness of this child’s wellbeing in our community.

**Suggestions for better communication between parents and teachers**

In my experience, it is always central to our relationship with our families to understand that parents are the first and most important teachers of our students. We must respect their role modeling as the centre of the student’s spiritual, moral and social make up. *Respect for parents (filial piety) derives from gratitude toward those who, by the gift of life, their love and their work, have brought their children into the world and enabled them to grow in stature, wisdom, and grace.* (CCC) This respect should also extend from teacher to parents and parents to teachers as we are partners in their child’s development and growth. We should learn to be able to acknowledge our own failings to each other. Conduct your work each day as a *member of a community of faith hope and love – welcoming and engaging each member’s gifts*.(CCC)